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ABSTRACT

This document addresses questions raised by recent reports on student transfer and degree completion rates at Indiana's public colleges and universities. It focuses on issues of intercampus transfer among Indiana public colleges and universities and includes some extended sections from the degree completion analysis. It provides policy implications for the seven key findings from the reports. While 48% of the non-transferring baccalaureate-seeking students completed a baccalaureate degree within 6 years, only 27% of those who changed campuses completed within 6 years. In the transfer process, students appear to at least lose momentum toward the completion of their degree, and most likely credits. However, another important finding is that students who complete an associate degree and then move into baccalaureate programs demonstrated a higher baccalaureate degree completion rate than those who began initially in baccalaureate programs. Compared nationally, fewer Indiana students from two-year campuses went on to complete a baccalaureate degree within 6 years of their initial enrollment. African American students demonstrated a baccalaureate degree completion rate that is substantially lower than the completion rates by students of other race/ethnicity groups. It is recommended that the commission encourage the development of 2+2 activity with attention to student's ability to move "without penalty" from the two-year campuses to the four-year campuses. (JA)

Follow-up on Student Transfer and Degree Completion at Indiana's Public Colleges and Universities

Indiana State Commission for Higher Education
Friday, March 13, 1998

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COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Friday, March 13, 1998

DISCUSSION ITEM D: Follow-up on Student Transfer and Degree Completion at Indiana's Public Colleges and Universities

Staff Recommendation For discussion only.

Background

Recent reports to the Commission on student transfer and degree completion rates at Indiana's public colleges and universities have lead to additional questions. The attached document and its discussion are intended to respond to questions which were raised at previous meetings of the Commission and focus on policy implications derived from this series of reports, begun in May, 1997.

The basic format and rationale for this set of information has been three-fold:

- update information consistent with the Commission's responsibility to report biennially on degree completion and persistence rates;
- survey institutions on current programs and practices aimed at improving student success; and
- update the Commission's methodology in order to provide data consistent with national and institutional practices.

The responses presented in the attached document are primarily focused on issues and questions of inter-campus transfer among Indiana public colleges and Universities. Also included are some extended sections from the degree completion analysis.

Supporting Document

Follow-up on Student Transfer and Degree Completion at Indiana's Public Colleges and Universities, March 4, 1998.

FOLLOW-UP ON STUDENT TRANSFER AND DEGREE COMPLETION AT INDIANA'S PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

March 4, 1998

INTRODUCTION

In recent months, a series of reports related to degree completion and persistence at Indiana's public colleges and universities has been delivered to the Commission. This collection comprises the most intensive analysis of degree completion and persistence information undertaken by the Commission to date. The reports, and their date of delivery to the Commission are listed below:

May, 1997	<i>Campus Retention Programs at Indiana Public Institutions: Working Paper</i>
May, 1997	<i>Indiana Degree Completion in National Context: Working Paper</i>
September, 1997	<i>Report on Degree Completion and Persistence in Indiana Public Postsecondary Education, 1990 Entering Freshmen: Biennial Report to the General Assembly</i>
December, 1997	<i>Student Transfer in Indiana -- Follow-up Report on Degree Completion and Persistence of 1990 Entering Freshmen: A Working Paper</i>

The basic rationale for this set of information is three-fold: (1) update information consistent with the Commission's responsibility to report biennially on degree completion and persistence rates; (2) survey institutions on current programs and practices aimed at improving student success; and (3) update the Commission's methodology in order to provide data consistent with national and institutional practices. With regard to the third rationale, degree completion rates have been a focus at the national level due to the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990. This act, referred to as SRK, has spawned a new data collection by the National Center for Education Statistics on graduation rates (collected in the context of the Integrated Postsecondary Education data System -- IPEDS -- as the Graduation Rates Survey). Of particular note in the IPEDS measurement, is the accounting for students who transfer from one campus or institution to another campus or institution. Because of the statewide nature of the Commission's Student Information System (SIS), Indiana's reporting has always included students who transfer within Indiana's public system of higher education, but reported with very little detail. The current set of reports sought to gain a better understanding of transfer activity as a component of degree completion and persistence.

GENERAL FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY ON STUDENT TRANSFER

Finding #1: Transferring students demonstrated a lower rate of degree completion than non-transferring students.

Discussion: While 48% of the non-transferring baccalaureate-seeking students completed a baccalaureate degree within six years, only 27% of those who changed campuses completed within six years.

Policy Implications: In the transfer process, students appear to at least lose momentum toward the completion of their degree, and most likely credits. The Commission should continue to monitor credit transfer activity with particular attention to credit transfer as a component of degree completion. [Note: SIS data beginning in 1996-97 contains data on credits transferred. Future reports on degree completion and persistence will be able to indicate credit hours completed as well as those recognized by receiving campuses.]

Finding #2: Students who complete an associate degree and then move on to a baccalaureate program demonstrated a higher baccalaureate degree completion rate than those who began initially in baccalaureate programs.

Discussion: Of the students who completed an associate degree and then moved on to pursue a baccalaureate degree, one-half (50%) completed a baccalaureate degree within six years of their initial enrollment as freshmen. Not only is this higher than the baccalaureate degree completion rate of associate students who moved on to baccalaureate programs *without* an associate degree (30%), it is also a higher degree completion rate than that of students who initially began at the baccalaureate level (45%). For illustration purposes, data from the December paper on student transfer is re-displayed below, using more descriptive labels.

It is necessary to recognize that these data reflect the performance of students who began their studies in the fall of 1990. As noted above, recent institutional initiatives facilitating credit transfer among Indiana's campuses are expected to have an impact on students' abilities to make "2+2" progress.

TABLE 1

**SIX-YEAR BACCALAUREATE COMPLETION RATES FOR STUDENTS
BEGINNING AS ASSOCIATE-SEEKING AND TRANSFERRING TO A
BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM AT INDIANA PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

	Type of Initial Campus		
	2-Year	4-Year	All
Students who began, but did not complete, an associate degree prior to transferring to a baccalaureate degree program	26%	37%	30%
Students who began <u>and</u> completed an associate degree prior to transferring to a baccalaureate degree program	40%	60%	50%
Total	30%	46%	36%

Policy Implications: While "2+2" articulation appears to be a positive factor overall, and particularly within Indiana's four-year colleges, students who began at a two-year campus, and students who did not complete their initial associate degree, demonstrated lower completion rates. The Commission should encourage the development of 2+2 activity with attention to students' ability to move "without penalty" from the two-year campuses to the four-year campuses.

Finding #3: Among students studied, who began in the Fall of 1990, more students transferred from four-year campuses to co-located campuses of Ivy Tech State College than transferred from Ivy Tech to the co-located four-year campuses.

Discussion: Given that this data is based on students who entered Indiana postsecondary education in 1990, this is prior to recent state and institutional efforts designed to enhance students' abilities to transfer between campuses, particularly from the two-year to the four-year campuses.

One question which arises is why students transfer from four-year campuses to two-year campuses. First, many of these students may have made a decision to return to their hometown because of social difficulties or financial pressures. Second, students often associate a more personal touch with a smaller environment, such as a two-year campus. Third, students having academic difficulties at a four-year campus may be able to boost their academic confidence and performance at a smaller and/or two-year campus.

More recent data suggests that the rate at which students from the two-year campuses are transferring to four-year campuses is

surpassing transfers from four-year to two-year campuses in all but a few Indiana locations (larger cities).

Policy Implications. The Commission should continue to monitor the implementation of the 30-credit transferable core of courses, and support institutional initiatives designed to aid students transferring within Indiana higher education.

Finding #4: Compared nationally, fewer Indiana students from two-year campuses went on to complete a baccalaureate degree within six years of their initial enrollment.

Discussion: The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has published data on Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS), tracked through 5 years after their initial enrollment in 1989. Of the students studied, who began as freshmen at a two-year public institution in 1989, 6.3% had completed a baccalaureate degree by 1994. By comparison, of the Indiana students who began as freshmen at an Indiana two-year college, 4.3% completed a baccalaureate degree.

There is an additional angle to this data. In the BPS data, of all students who began at a two-year public institution, *and ever showed as baccalaureate-seeking*, 9.1% received a baccalaureate degree. These same criteria applied to Indiana students show 27.4% receiving a baccalaureate degree. The reason for this discrepancy appears that comparatively few Indiana students who began at two-year campuses [in 1990] even made the attempt to transition from the two-year campuses into a baccalaureate program. Updates to transfer activity in more recent years should shed new light on whether this continues to hold true.

Policy Implications. The Commission should continue to support State and institutional initiatives which encourage and support student transfer and "2+2" articulation.

Finding #5: Student transfer from Indiana public two-year campuses to Indiana public four-year campuses, as measured by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges lags behind the average for all reporting states.

Discussion: In the Transfer Assembly data, compiled by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, a transfer rate of 22% was reported for all participating states¹ using students who began in 1990. This rate is calculated as the portion of students

¹ Published reports by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges do not include state-level detail for comparison.

enrolling in a state four-year institution who met the following initial criteria: entered a two-year campus as a new freshman in the fall of 1990; completed at least 12 credits at that two-year campus within the first four years; and, transferred to a four-year campus within four years of initial enrollment.

A key difference in the way in which the Transfer Assembly data is calculated is that ALL first-time entering students at a two-year college are considered for the cohort, whereas, when degree completion rates are studied, typically only degree-seeking students (as identified by the institutions) are used.

Using the Transfer Assembly method, and cohort definitions, for 1990 freshmen, the Indiana transfer rate is 15%. This figure is derived by selecting 30,889 students who are identified as "first-time" students at either Ivy Tech State College or Vincennes University. Of these students, 13,084 (43%) completed 12 or more credits at that original campus within four years. Of those students, 1,974 (15%) enrolled in at an Indiana four-year campus by Fall 1994. This represents a gain in student transfer from the 11% reported using 1987 entering freshmen.² In addition, programs and data since 1990 are expected to show additional gains, facilitated by initiatives such as the 30-credit core of general education courses.

The difference in cohort selection for the Transfer Assembly compared to the degree Completion analysis is significant because, at Indiana's two-year public campuses, less than one third (31%) of the students identified as "first-time" are also coded as the "degree-seeking" cohort. Using degree-seeking status, the Transfer Assembly methodology yields a transfer rate of 19%.

Policy Implications. The Commission should continue to support State and institutional initiatives which encourage and support student transfer and "2+2" articulation. In addition, the Commission may wish to consider developing incentives aimed at improving student success and transfer.

² Because of continued interest, and recent reports, in the success of African American students, the transfer rate for this sub-group has also been calculated. Using the Transfer Assembly methodology on 1990 first-time students at Indiana's two-year public institutions, 2,208 African American students began as first-time students; 1,181 (53%) completed 12 or more credits within four years at the original campus; and, 128 (11%) transferred to an Indiana public four-year campus by Fall 1994. This represents a lower transfer rate for African American students than the 15% measured on ALL students.

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION ON TRANSFERRING STUDENTS

In addition to the data presented in the paper on student transfer, information has been requested on the demographic profile of transferring students compared to non-transferring students, including differences in transfer and degree completion by full-time versus part-time entering students.

Finding #6: Based on additional data presented in Table 2, on the following page, there are several key student characteristics associated with transfer activity:

- Hoosier students transfer at a much higher rate than Non-Hoosier students.
- Older students are much less likely to transfer than younger students.
- Among student ethnic categories, Asian/Pacific Island students demonstrated less of a tendency to transfer.
- By campus-type and attendance status, students beginning part-time at two-year campuses were least likely to transfer (also supports age-group findings)

Discussion: Older students demonstrate two patterns detrimental to educational attainment: lower completion rates, and low transfer rates. Through anecdotal information, these patterns are explained based on external demands placed on older students, including financial pressures, work, and family. These demands mean that these older students are typically more place-bound and restricted in their "free" time.

Policy Implications: The Commission should continue to support institutional efforts to enhance access to postsecondary education and student services, particularly for older students.

TABLE 2

**PRE-DEGREE STUDENT TRANSFER RATES,
BY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

	Transfer & Completion Rates of All Transferring Students						Comparative Degree Completion* By ALL Students (g)
	STUDENT TRANSFER RATE			DEGREE COMPLETION RATE*			
	All Entering Students (a)	Students Beginning Full-Time (b)	Students Beginning Part-Time (c)	Students Beginning Full-Time (d)	Students Beginning Part-Time (e)	All Entering Students (f)	
RESIDENCY							
Hoosier	20.3%	21.6%	16.5%	34.7%	25.7%	32.8%	39.6%
Non-Hoosier	2.7%	2.4%	9.8%	43.7%	—	41.3%	63.2%
GENDER							
Male	18.2%	19.0%	15.8%	39.7%	29.0%	37.3%	43.6%
Female	18.3%	18.5%	17.2%	29.5%	21.1%	28.0%	41.1%
ETHNICITY							
African American	19.2%	20.9%	14.8%	14.5%	9.4%	13.4%	20.9%
American Native	15.4%	17.8%	11.1%	--	--	--	35.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	9.6%	9.8%	13.6%	34.1%	--	34.7%	54.3%
Hispanic	18.9%	21.4%	13.2%	28.3%	18.5%	26.4%	33.4%
White, Not Hispanic	18.4%	18.9%	16.8%	36.6%	26.9%	34.6%	44.1%
AGE AT ENTRY							
Under 19 Years	19.7%	18.8%	30.5%	36.7%	38.9%	37.0%	52.9%
19 to 25 Years	16.5%	19.9%	18.0%	33.1%	19.3%	30.3%	38.4%
Over 25 Years	10.1%	9.0%	10.5%	24.7%	22.2%	22.9%	21.4%
INITIAL CAMPUS TYPE							
4-Year	18.6%	18.6%	18.1%	37.7%	25.2%	35.8%	47.5%
2-Year	17.2%	19.3%	14.3%	23.0%	26.2%	24.2%	27.5%
TOTAL	18.2%	18.8%	16.4%	34.9%	26.9%	33.0%	42.4%

* Completion Rates reported in Table 2 represent the completion of ANY degree within six years of initial enrollment.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS ON STUDENT DEGREE COMPLETION

Finding #7: African American students demonstrated a baccalaureate degree completion rate which is substantially lower than the completion rates by students of other race/ethnicity groups.

Discussion: The 1997 report on degree completion and persistence found that, while 45% of all baccalaureate-seeking students completed a baccalaureate degree within six years, the rate for African American students was only 24%. This pattern has remained similar from prior analyses as well. Using the 1986 class of entering freshmen, degree completion can be tracked to ten years from initial enrollment. Table 3, illustrates the general findings on baccalaureate degree completion rates after 6-, 8-, and 10-years for Indiana public higher education.

In all instances, there were continued gains in degree completion beyond the standard measure of six years. There are two key factors in the completion rates of African American students. First, the completion rates are less than half of those for all students. This is significant to note because the six-year rates for 1990 entering freshmen indicate higher degree completion rates and slightly less of a discrepancy between all students and the African American students (45% and 24% for 1990 entering freshmen, respectively, compared to 42% and 18% among 1986 freshmen). Second, the African American students have a higher tendency toward part-time enrollment than other students. Part-time enrollment is associated with lower degree completion rates.

Policy Implications: Initiatives supporting the success of minority students should continue to be encouraged. This should include goals not only of enhancing student retention, but also the support of more full-time enrollment by minority students.

TABLE 3

**BACCALAUREATE DEGREE COMPLETION RATES
BY 1986 ENTERING FRESHMEN AFTER 6-, 8-, AND 10-YEARS:
1986 ENTERING FRESHMEN**

	<u>Baccalaureate Degree Completion Rates</u>		
	<u>6-Years</u>	<u>8-Years</u>	<u>10-Years</u>
All Students	42%	46%	48%
Full-Time	61%	65%	66%
Part-Time	17%	22%	24%
African-American Students	18%	22%	23%
Full-Time	32%	37%	38%
Part-Time	6%	9%	10%

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Transfer activity with Indiana's Independent Colleges and Universities

Data to answer questions on transfer between the public and private sectors of Indiana higher education are not available.

More current data on transfer activity

Upcoming reports on the status of student transfer and the 30-credit transferable core will provide additional, and more recent, detail on credits transferred between campuses. Data on the actual number of credits transferred did not become a part of the Commission's data collection process until the 1995-96 data cycle.